

---

**APPEALS BOARD  
UTAH LABOR COMMISSION**

**CHRISTOPHER AUTRY,**

**Petitioner,**

**vs.**

**WEATHERFORD INTERNATIONAL  
and AMERICAN HOME ASSURANCE  
COMPANY,**

**Respondents.**

**ORDER AFFIRMING  
ALJ'S DECISION**

**Case No. 06-1165**

---

Christopher Autry asks the Appeals Board of the Utah Labor Commission to review Administrative Law Judge Hann's denial of Mr. Autry's claim for benefits under the Utah Workers' Compensation Act, Title 34A, Chapter 2, Utah Code Annotated.

The Appeals Board exercises jurisdiction over this motion for review pursuant to Utah Code Annotated § 63-46b-12 and § 34A-2-801(3).

**BACKGROUND AND ISSUE PRESENTED**

Mr. Autry claims workers' compensation benefits from Weatherford International and its insurance carrier, American Home Assurance Company, (hereafter referred to jointly as "Weatherford") for a work accident that occurred on July 1, 2004, causing injury to both elbows. At issue is whether Mr. Autry is entitled to further benefits after April 3, 2006, the date that Weatherford claims his condition reached medical stability. Judge Hann held an evidentiary hearing and then referred the case to a medical panel due to conflicting medical opinions. After reviewing the panel's opinion, Judge Hann denied Mr. Autry's claim.

In his motion for review, Mr. Autry argues that the panel's opinion lacked a thorough explanation for its conclusions and, therefore, the weight of the evidence shows Mr. Autry's current condition and ongoing treatment are causally related to his injury at Weatherford.

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

The Commission adopts Judge Hann's findings of fact. The following facts are relevant to the motion for review:

As part of his job duties, Mr. Autry repaired oil extraction pumping units, which required repetitive use of a sledge hammer to break down parts. As a result of his work, on July 1, 2004, Mr. Autry developed bilateral elbow pain. On November 3, 2004, Mr. Autry began treatment with Dr.

**ORDER AFFIRMING DECISION**  
**CHRISTOPHER AUTRY**  
**PAGE 2 OF 4**

Relyea, an orthopedic surgeon, who diagnosed him with bilateral epicondylitis. Mr. Autry continued treatment with Dr. Relyea over the next year. During this time, Dr. Relyea diagnosed Mr. Autry with bilateral epicondylitis and bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome and performed surgery on the right elbow on April 29, 2005, and bilateral carpal tunnel release surgery on September 9, 2005.

On October 4, 2005, Mr. Autry, who was working for a different employer, aggravated his left elbow condition and Dr. Relyea recommended surgery. At Weatherford's request, Dr. Knoebel examined Mr. Autry. He concurred with Dr. Relyea's previous diagnoses and treatment for bilateral epicondylitis and bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome. Dr. Knoebel's opinion was that Mr. Autry's right elbow condition had reached medical stability, but, in concurrence with Dr. Relyea, that the left elbow condition had not reached medical stability and needed surgery. Mr. Autry had left elbow surgery on December 9, 2005. On April 3, 2006, Dr. Knoebel evaluated Mr. Autry and assessed the left elbow as medically stable.

On April 6, 2006, Mr. Autry returned to Dr. Relyea with additional complaints of bilateral wrist pain and underwent further treatment, including injections. On September 28, 2006, Dr. Relyea recommended surgery for left medial epicondylitis. In a letter dated November 7, 2006, Dr. Relyea indicated his opinion that his treatment of Mr. Autry since April 3, 2006, and the recommended surgery were related to Mr. Autry's July 1, 2004, work injury at Weatherford.

Based on the conflicting medical opinions between Drs. Relyea and Knoebel with respect to the date Mr. Autry reached medical stability for his work injuries, Judge Hann appointed a medical panel. The panelists, an expert in occupational medicine and a hand surgeon, concluded that there was no medical causal connection between Mr. Autry's conditions after April 3, 2006, and the July 1, 2004, accident.

**DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

The issue before the Appeals Board is whether Mr. Autry's ongoing medical care since April 3, 2006, has been necessary to treat the July 1, 2004, work-related injuries. Both parties presented evidence to support their respective positions. Due to the conflict in those opinions, Judge Hann appointed an impartial medical panel to evaluate the medical evidence. The panelists, who are experts in medical specialties relevant to Mr. Autry's claim, reviewed the medical record, personally examined Mr. Autry, and concluded that Mr. Autry's condition and treatment after April 3, 2006, was not medically caused by his work accident of July 1, 2004. Given the panel's expertise and independence, the Appeals Board finds the panel's opinion persuasive.

Mr. Autry's contention that the panel's report failed to adequately explain its conclusions is noted; however, the Appeals Board finds the panel's explanation is sufficient when considered with all of the evidence, including Dr. Knoebel's detailed opinion reaching the same conclusions. Therefore the Appeals Board concurs with Judge Hann's conclusion that Mr. Autry's bilateral elbow condition and ongoing treatment after April 3, 2006, were not medically caused by the work accident

**ORDER AFFIRMING DECISION  
CHRISTOPHER AUTRY  
PAGE 3 OF 4**

of July 1, 2004, and affirms Judge Hann's denial of benefits.

**ORDER**

The Appeals Board affirms Judge Hann's decision. It is so ordered.

Dated this 28<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2008.

---

Colleen S. Colton, Chair

---

Patricia S. Drawe

---

Joseph E. Hatch

**NOTICE OF APPEAL RIGHTS**

Any party may ask the Appeals Board of the Utah Labor Commission to reconsider this Order. Any such request for reconsideration must be received by the Appeals Board within 20 days of the date of this order. Alternatively, any party may appeal this order to the Utah Court of Appeals by filing a petition for review with the court. Any such petition for review must be received by the court within 30 days of the date of this order.

**ORDER AFFIRMING DECISION  
CHRISTOPHER AUTRY  
PAGE 4 OF 4**